The Strange and Terrifying Ideas of Neoreactionaries

Author Elizabeth Sandifer explains the dangerous ideas of the far-right neoreactionaries, who have ties to Silicon Valley and a hostility toward democracy.

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ELIZABETH SANDIFER IS THE AUTHOR of *Neoreaction a Basilisk: Essays On and Around the Alt-Right*. She has taken a deep dive into the thoughts and writings of the so-called neoreactionary movement, or the "new right," a tendency highlighted in a recent *Vanity Fair* article by James Pogue, who reported from the National Conservative Conference. Pogue argues that there is a new tendency in right-wing thought that is influencing some prominent Republican candidates for office, including J.D. Vance of Ohio and Blake Masters of Arizona, both of whom have close ties to Peter Thiel, the PayPal billionaire, and also to a rather mysterious and lesser-known public intellectual by the name of Curtis Yarvin, a.k.a. Mencius Moldbug. Is this a fringe intellectual tendency that can be ignored, or a budding

movement? Sandifer spoke with editor-in-chief Nathan J. Robinson on the *Current Affairs* podcast to sort things out. This interview has been edited and condensed for grammar and clarity.

ROBINSON

Elizabeth Sandifer, I need you to help us understand this neoreactionary tendency. Can you discuss what it is?

SANDIFER

Neoreaction is one attempt of modern far right philosophy—we can just go ahead and call it fascism—to create an intellectual basis. It was formulated by Curtis Yarvin, who writes under the pen name Mencius Moldbug, or formerly wrote.

ROBINSON

The artist formerly known as Moldbug?

SANDIFER

These days he uses his real name Curtis Yarvin, but I still think of him as Moldbug because that's what he was going by when I wrote about him. Yarvin has been quite influential on a number of key people. He has a demonstrably huge influence on Peter Thiel. We know he's got influence on Blake Masters and J.D. Vance, as that *Vanity Fair* article makes clear. We have very strong evidence that he's had influence on Steve Bannon. He's just a guy a lot of these people look to as kind of an intellectual light. He's been on the Tucker Carlson show, which did a fair bit to mainstream him. So a lot of people look up to him as something of an intellectual light, which is interesting if you actually read any of his work, because, well... I call him outright *stupid* in my book, and I'm gonna largely stand by that.

I think that there is a long tradition of right-wing "philosophy" that's really popular among right-wing nutters and as soon as it gets outside that little bubble, it gets absolutely shot to hell by other philosophers. And I think to describe Yarvin in terms he would probably take as a compliment—and I very much mean as an insult—he's kind of a modern day Ayn Rand.

So his broad philosophical idea is he's just really obsessed with *order.* He thinks that *order* is the absolute best thing that can happen. Chaos, unruliness, rebelliousness—all these things are inherently very, very bad.

And so his belief, as he expressed back in his Moldbug days—and he's not really backed down off of it in any substantive way—is that basically, California should secede, become its own nation, and simply impose a CEO with monarchic, godlike powers. At the time, he suggested Steve Jobs would be a particularly good pick for the absolute monarch of California and that the purpose of owning California and running it as a corporate monarchy is explicitly for profit. That was also a part of Yarvin's philosophical vision for what the world should do.

I don't want to pin him too much with the slightly satirical and deliberately over-the-top clickbait-y idea of making Steve Jobs king of California—that is him using a rhetorical device to get attention. But he does very, very much believe that rich elites should be in absolute control of everything, and people who are not landowners and do not have a ton of money should basically be thought of as the equivalent of slaves.

ROBINSON

The philosophy here is explicitly monarchist, right? He openly believes that one person should have almost absolute power.

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SANDIFER

The person should be accountable to a board of directors, perhaps. But no more than that, and the board of directors should just be able to fire him and replace him with a new absolute monarchy if they feel the need. He's very clear on that. Again, back in his more satirical Moldbug days, he actually advocated for Stuart restoration in the UK, the rolling back of the Glorious Revolution, and undoing William of Orange's takeover and the reign of William and Mary to put it back in the hands of the Stuart kings. He thought that the Whiggish democratic turn was a fundamental mistake of history that should be undone. Again, this is him in his older satirical mode.

ROBINSON

Was he being satirical when he endorsed or appeared to endorse human slavery?

SANDIFER

This is the problem with his semi-satirical, clickbait-y mode of writing. He doesn't seem to make a huge distinction between employees and slaves in his philosophical system. He certainly seems to believe that outright indentured servitude and ownership is an acceptable arrangement. And he sure did overtly say that Black people are genetically predisposed to make good slaves. These are all things he definitely, literally says. Was he perhaps being satirical? I guess my response to that is: *do you really care if he's being satirical* when he says Black people are genetically predisposed to making good slaves? Personally, I don't.

ROBINSON

I am torn as to how valuable it is to go into the philosophy because, as you say, it is, in many ways, extremely stupid. I was reading it. This guy has a Substack and it is, to me, unreadable.

SANDIFER

He is frighteningly verbose. I've heard people say he's a good writer. I don't see it at all.

ROBINSON

Oh, my God. I've never read anything worse.

SANDIFER

Right. As someone who has written a number of books and at least has a modest amount of popular acclaim, inasmuch as I am an expert on prose writing, his prose is absolutely unreadable. It's shit. I'm allowed to swear here, right?

ROBINSON

Yes.

SANDIFER

It's complete festering dogshit. It's horrible. It is verbose. It makes a painful lack of effort to get to the point on the occasion when it actually makes a point. His argumentation *aspires* to shoddiness, because that would at least imply that there's a degree of construction there. It's absolutely awful. I take it apart in some meticulous detail in *Neoreaction a Basilisk* because in that book, I thought it was important to pay it as much intellectual respect as I could before I took it out back and shot it. But it was not hard to argue against and to find the flaws. You're really playing on easy mode there.

ROBINSON

Your book does a public service. People don't have to comb through thousands of pages to try to understand the things you've read. You've laid it out.

SANDIFER

I'll make this fully explicit. I cannot encourage you enough *not to bother reading this.* You have something better to do with your life—clipping your toenails, perhaps. Staring at a wall. Many small crimes that only do a little bit of harm. Avoid reading him. *Literally almost anything you can think of to do right now is a better idea than reading Curtis Yarvin.*

ROBINSON

I felt a certain kinship with you. One of the things I do for *Current Affairs* is read right-wing books and review them.

SANDIFER

Some of us, because of what can only be described as poor life choices, find ourselves in careers where it is necessary to read these things and describe them for other people in hopefully more entertaining and efficient ways. And, you know, as a fellow member of this profession, you have my sympathy. But for listeners who are not writers and do not imminently intend to publish a book and get paid for it, do not read this unless someone is paying you good money.

ROBINSON

It was kind of shocking to me when I started a dive into the collected works of Moldbug. It doesn't really make many attempts to be convincing in a very logical way. I mean, let's say you were to try to persuade me that it's a good idea to have a dictator, which is what he believes. He believes that we should

have a dictator. He believes in a hierarchy. He believes in abolishing democracy and elections and the participation of the governed in governance. If you were to try to convince me of those incredibly radical propositions that instinctively horrify me, you would have a pretty high burden. And he doesn't even really seem to make much of an attempt to show why this wouldn't be horrifying and dystopian.

SANDIFER

It reads hellishly dystopian. You could write a really good cyberpunk dystopia off of the ideas espoused by Curtis Yarvin. I may or may not be working on that. There's a passage in his Mencius Moldbug days when he very ardently and passionately describes basically the entire Whiggish movement—a lot of old British radical groups like the Levellers and more broadly the entire kind of romantic, rebellious artistic tradition of British literature, people like William Blake—as a bunch of freaks who he despises and thinks the world is worse off for existing. I am someone who is very passionate about William Blake in particular. A lot of these people that he dismisses as evil freaks, I look to as outright role models.

I have a very, very strong and basic disagreement with Yarvin/Moldbug… I'm going to be doing this [with his name] the whole podcast. I apologize.

ROBINSON

If he attached the name Moldbug to himself once, he has to live with that for life. I'm not going to participate in this project to mainstream him by calling him "Curtis Yarvin."

SANDIFER

I have some very basic strong philosophical differences with him on very fundamental aesthetic, almost primal levels. I look at his work and am viscerally repulsed. I read his ideal society and see what sounds to me like a description of Hell.

ROBINSON

What's interesting about reading far right philosophy is that they're very open about their attempt to make a world that would not be worth living in. I have read *Mein Kampf*, and everything Hitler lays out is a program for killing everyone I love and everything that I love.

SANDIFER

I suppose in defense of their logical consistency and intellectual honesty, I wouldn't want to be alive in their world, but they don't want me to be alive in their world, either.

ROBINSON

It's true. They're pretty clear about it. The word fascism is tossed about a lot. But I think one of the things that is valuable about the works of Yarvin is that he's very open about it. He really does say: *We need a dictatorship, and it needs to be pretty absolute.* And I hate all of the freaks. And I believe in a world of order, and I'm not going to try to justify why that order is good. But I think that I, and people like me, should be at the top of the social hierarchy, and everyone else should be brutally oppressed.

SANDIFER

He's not a venture capitalist billionaire or anything. But I think he really thinks people like Peter Thiel and Elon Musk should be running the world. There is something of a cult around these people, and Yarvin believes in it wholeheartedly. Yarvin absolutely believes that people who are good at making money

are probably good at everything else.

ROBINSON

So the way that we've talked about it so far makes it seem like it could appeal to almost nobody who wasn't extremely rich themselves. Musk obviously has his cult. But there's something that you discuss in the book that seems to be part of the source of the appeal of these ideas. Anti-semitism is often called the socialism of fools, right? Because it uses some of the opposition to capitalists and bankers, but it misplaces the villain. Yarvin's diagnosis of society—the things that he points out, that he's trying to rectify, he actually matches about 30 percent of things that I hear Noam Chomsky say about the dysfunctions of liberalism. That gives a certain truth to some of what he says in terms of his *diagnosis,* even though his prescription is fascism.

SANDIFER

My dear friend, Jack Graham, who co-wrote one of the chapters of *Neoreaction a Basilisk* with me, gave me a phrase that I happily stole within the book, where he says that Yarvin is a failed Marxist in the same way that Jupiter is a failed star. Yarvin starts down this analysis, and if you follow it reasonably rigorously, you get to a fairly accurate and useful diagnosis of everything that is wrong with the world. And then somewhere on the way, before he gets to any of those actual good points, he makes just an apocalyptic wrong turn, and concludes that Steve Jobs should become king of California.

ROBINSON

So perhaps you could describe the starting point of his analysis of what is wrong with society.

SANDIFER

His starting point is the extremely self-evident assertion that there is an overall consensus. He reinvents the Overton window from scratch. He reinvents the idea that there is a dictated set of opinions which are acceptable and possible to discuss and to take seriously. There is this political center around which nothing can orbit too far away from without freezing to death. It's fundamentally dictated by a number of elite and powerful institutions. So the *New York Times* does a whole lot to dictate what the political center is. There are many other examples. The ones that Yarvin is most obsessed with are basically the media, academia, and the civil service end of government. He views those as the big three institutions that are imposing a kind of absolute consensus that he says is drifting in an ever leftward liberal direction. He points to the progress of civil rights, takes Martin Luther King, Jr.'s observation about the arc of the moral universe bending toward justice over the long run and renders it a horror story, actually referring to this centrist consensus as Cthulhu and saying that "Cthulhu always swims left."

The sensible thing to do is probably to look at the role of money in this.

ROBINSON

Yes. I was going to point out that there's a notable absence from that list, which is big business.

SANDIFER

Nowhere on Yarvin's list of things that are controlling the world and setting up a political center is finance. Whereas, in reality, finance turns out to do an awful lot, as evidenced by the fact that, for instance, if you happen to be one of the richest people in the world, you can meet your girlfriend on a web site, have a bit of a falling out with her, get made fun of, and decide you're going to suddenly now own one of the largest social

media platforms in the world. That's a thing that can happen if you are a billionaire. It is not a thing that can happen to most people. And so suddenly, Twitter—one of these huge social media sites, something that is quite central to media discourse—is getting taken over by someone who is spouting a lot of far-right ideas, who initially made his money working with Peter Thiel, who is the person whose is bankrolling Curtis Yarvin's bullshit, who is very clearly influenced by this orbit. I know that the *Wall Street Journal* reported that Thiel was advising Musk on his Twitter takeover. And suddenly they own this massive media platform, and the only reason that's happening is money. There is no academic, no civil service, no mainstream media component to why Twitter is about to take a right-wing plunge. It is entirely because money has a shitload of power. To give a very, very basic analysis that probably, you know, is downright obvious to a number of your listeners, but it's something that never occurs to Yarvin.

ROBINSON

Moldbug talks about a small class of elites controlling the discourse, and he talks about, as you say, the boundaries of acceptable opinion—and when he says that, he's almost 100 percent overlapping with Chomsky. But as you point out, there's this absence of Marx in his work, where Moldbug doesn't seem to have read or understood the left analysis of these things.

SANDIFER

In his last big essay under the Moldbug pen name, he creates this acronym/mantra, "America is a communist country," and claims that it is true in all sorts of different ways that you can interpret it. And one thing that literally never comes up anywhere in that essay is whether America is actually run on communist principles similar to those explained by Karl Marx. That literally never occurs to Moldbug—in the course of literally thousands of words about how America is supposedly a communist country—which is something of an intellectual oversight, I think. I feel like there is a failure of due diligence that went on in this essay.

ROBINSON

We have dwelled on the work of a somewhat obscure and stupid person who's a bad writer. But when I read that *Vanity Fair* article, I got chills. J.D. Vance is explicitly saying that Yarvin has a bunch of great ideas. J.D. Vance could be in the *Senate*.

SANDIFER

Look at the U.S. Senate. You don't necessarily see that a U.S. senator is a lot better than a billionaire as evidence of intelligence.

ROBINSON

It's true.

SANDIFER

There are, in fact, a lot of stupid people in the United States Senate. And I'm willing to say that as a bipartisan critique.

ROBINSON

But there are not necessarily that many people who explicitly espouse a desire for a dictatorship. And there are some quotes from J.D. Vance in that article, where the writer says Vance sounds like he's talking about a coup. Vance says that the next president should fire everyone in the government, replace them

with ideologues, and ignore the courts if they try to stop him.

SANDIFER

Right. The flip side of that is we shouldn't delude ourselves about the fact that there are multiple fascists—*in* the U.S. government right now—who want to overthrow the U.S. government. Vance is coming in. Look at Joshua Hawley out of Missouri. He's just as fucking bad. He's espousing the same level of fascist takeover shit. And those are the more intellectual ones. Go into the House and suddenly you get Madison Cawthorn and Marjorie Taylor Greene and that clan of nut jobs. (I do mean *clan*.) There are people who are in the U.S. Congress who are fully endorsing these fascist monarchic ideas. The Vance idea is interesting to me because the specific fascist ideas he's espousing are ones I wrote a book on six years ago. But at the end of the day, we shouldn't treat Vance as an outlier at this point. The really scary thing is, he's not.

ROBINSON

Yes. Even if there aren't that many who are tied to this weird specific neoreaction thing, this neoreactionary ideology is kind of, as you say, a more explicit and upfront statement of the basic right-wing worldview, which is in favor of really strict social hierarchies enforced by violence and keeping down anyone who would dare to challenge those hierarchies.

SANDIFER

Along with strong populist and, inevitably, in practice, *white* dude dictators who run this jackboot and pony show.

ROBINSON

We should talk about a couple of the other figures in your book besides Yarvin. But the book is called *Neoreaction a Basilisk*. Explain what the *Basilisk* in the title is.

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SANDIFER

Oh, God. Okay. So, Curtis Yarvin came to present prominence—got his initial readership before he spun off to his own blog—on a website called *Overcoming Bias*, a website loosely organized around a community that called themselves "the rationalists." The main figure in that is a guy named Eliezer Yudkowsky, who would describe himself as an AI researcher. It's important to note that he has literally no computer science qualifications; cannot—to the best of my knowledge—code; has never built an AI; and does not actually understand anything about how AI works on a technical level. But he is an AI researcher, which really means he writes science fiction. He writes science fiction novels that he passes off as philosophy and scholarship. He is horribly obsessed with the idea that someday an artificial intelligence is going to wake up, achieve sentience, take over the world, and destroy humanity because it sees no point in humanity. He writes great science fiction phrases. He's got a phrase: "The AI does not love you. The AI does not hate you. But you are made out of atoms which the AI can use for something else." That's charming and chilling, and throw that into a science fiction horror book about an evil AI and you're going to get a Hugo nomination for that stuff. As an analysis of computer science and the state of play of current technology, it has nothing to do with anything that is actually happening in AI research, nanotechnology, or anything else. It's purely science fiction. But it's pretty good science fiction.

And so a lot of tech bro people are really, really into him because he makes them feel good. He says that they're all super logical, rational people, and they can learn to make no mistakes if they just use his one weird trick for thinking rationally. He's just had a lot of influence despite being frankly a kind of weirdo cult leader.

But the Basilisk. What you actually asked about. The Basilisk comes from an incident that arose in Yudkowsky's community where this guy named Roko, who went on to be a fascist, came up with a thought experiment imagining a futuristic, godlike AI. As I said, they're terrified of an evil AI. They also want to create a god AI that will reincarnate them on a hard drive so they can live forever. And so this guy Roko imagined the god AI and said: Wait a minute, *what if when the god AI exists, he looks back at everyone who failed to help bring him about and declares they're evil, and should be reincarnated on a computer and tortured for all eternity?* He made this argument that was entirely consistent with the many weird cult-like premises of Yudkowsky and his rationalists and created this idea of this godlike AI that would torture them all if they didn't give all their money to AI research to try to bring him about—which, if you look at it from a perspective of not being a weirdo AI cult member, is basically just reinventing Pascal's Wager.

ROBINSON

Pascal's wager being that it pays to believe in God because if you don't, God will punish you—if he exists.

SANDIFER

Yes, good explanation. And so all of these AI cultists, broadly speaking, absolutely lost their shit. They had an epic meltdown-panic attack. Yudkowsky was, at one point, screaming in all caps about how the worst thing you can possibly do is talk about the evil godlike AI in the future that does this, because talking about it brings it into existence. Everyone is having a complete emotional meltdown over having accidentally

invented Pascal's Wager. And the whole incident eventually becomes a bit of popular lore that people who are the right kind of nerd know about. Jokes about Roko's Basilisk, which is what this whole affair became known as, were actually what got Elon Musk and Grimes together. They both made the same pun about Roko's Basilisk independently and found each other through it.

ROBINSON

Wow. I never knew that.

SANDIFER

My friend, David Gerard, who was the initial reader and editor of *Neoreaction a Basilisk*, was the one who preserved all the transcripts of the meltdown and put them on RationalWiki. That's why anyone knows about this. So he is ultimately single-handedly responsible for Elon Musk taking over Twitter just by popularizing Roko's Basilisk. It's horrible. He feels terrible about it.

ROBINSON

I fear that some of our listeners, hearing your explanation, may have thought to themselves at some point during…

SANDIFER

What the fuck is going on here?

ROBINSON

"I don't understand this. It's bizarre."

SANDIFER

I should have prefaced this with: What I am about to say is going to sound completely insane, and that's because it is.

ROBINSON

I'm glad you explained it because I think that it's important to understand that even if you don't grasp this whole thing about a godlike artificial intelligence in the future and whatever…

SANDIFER

And you should feel better about yourself if you don't. If it did make any sense, you should really be worried.

ROBINSON

First, the people who believe in this very bizarre thing consider themselves to be extremely logical—more logical than anyone else, right?

SANDIFER

Yes. Functionally, they believe themselves to be, if not infallible on an individual level, at least infallible on a collective level.

ROBINSON

Secondly, this rationalist community that you're talking about that drifts into extremely bizarre and sometimes fascist beliefs is quite influential in Silicon Valley.

SANDIFER

Hugely so. If you talk not just to management, but even many of the frontline software engineer/coder nerds, they all know who Eliezer Yudkowsky is. This is absolutely a household name within the specific bubble and enclave of Silicon Valley tech.

ROBINSON

And there's an entire intellectual ecosystem here. You've written about the Slate Star Codex blog.

SANDIFER

Ah, yes, Mr. Siskind.

ROBINSON

He's this rationalist who's very opposed to social justice politics and is, perhaps, a little too open-minded about Charles Murray and...

SANDIFER

He's a gateway to outright fascist ideas. He has openly said that he is a race eugenicist who believes that IQ is heritable. He definitely believes this to be true. He has said as much. He plays a little coy in public, but in his personal beliefs, he is a racist authoritarian. I absolutely believe this.

ROBINSON

And he is extremely popular among some people. He has a big following among a lot of these Silicon Valley types.

SANDIFER

Absolutely. His blog was widely considered essential reading among the Silicon Valley types. And then you go to the subreddit for his blog, and people are literally posting the 14 words, which are a huge white nationalist slogan and just not even a dog whistle, just a whistle.

ROBINSON

One of the reasons I wanted to speak to you is that it does seem as if the things that you've been writing about for years were curiosities when you started writing about them, or had a cult following. It seems to be inching closer and closer to the mainstream, both through J.D. Vance and through Elon Musk. Musk talks about the AI that's going to destroy us all, and I'm sure is inspired by a lot of these people.

SANDIFER

The important takeaway here is that all of the people I've been describing are very, very stupid. Their ideas make no sense if you look at them under any scrutiny whatsoever. And they are actively taking over the world right now. And they are going to kill millions of people. It's funny on the one hand, but on the other hand, they are actively taking over the world, and they are literally going to kill people like me. I want to be deadly serious here. These people are very, very evil, and they are actively gaining power.

ROBINSON

I think that's incredibly important. It's so easy—especially if you look at the writings of Moldbug—to just look at it and go, this is a bunch of garbage. Who could be persuaded by this?

SANDIFER

And the answer is: literally the top adviser [Steve Bannon] of our last president. That is who can be persuaded.

ROBINSON

To hear the story of this weird Basilisk and that all these people think the Basilisk from the future is coming ... and then to realize that these are people who are in positions of quite high status and who have the dangerous fallacious belief that they are as close to perfectly logical as one can be.

SANDIFER

I don't want to suggest that Elon Musk literally believes in Roko's Basilisk, but the new owner of one of the largest social media sites in the world definitely takes Roko's Basilisk a lot more seriously than it deserves to be taken. And that should definitely raise some red flags, especially when you get into the fact that he made his money with Peter Thiel and Thiel bankrolled Yarvin and bankrolled Yudkowsky. There's a network of people here who are increasingly powerful, and they are very, very scary.

ROBINSON

We talked about the dictatorial tendencies, but we haven't discussed the extent to which a lot of this is founded on "anti-wokeness" and the hatred of Black Lives Matter and other movements for liberation.

SANDIFER

When you describe this stuff, it doesn't sound very appealing. And so, to most of the people upon whose electoral support this movement relies, these aren't the bits they describe. What they describe is: Black people are all getting free crack pipes from Obama. What they describe is, trans people are grooming your kids and are going to take them away from you. What they describe is the entire pro-life argument: pro life, anti-abortion, anti-choice, what is about to win in the U.S. Supreme Court and outlaw abortion for more than half of the country. These are the arguments they use to win electoral power. But behind the scenes, when you trace the intellectual roots of the arguments of the people who are in practice running a site like *Breitbart,* these are the things you find.

Yarvin openly talked about how political alliances with white nationalist are sometimes odious because they're stupid, nasty people but probably useful for achieving the political goals he wants. Most of them are racist, transphobic, misogynistic assholes themselves. I don't want to suggest that these aspects of their arguments are purely ironic affectation. Fundamentally, if you give even the remotest shit about Black people, you don't ally with white nationalists. The very fact that you ally with white nationalists speaks volumes about your racism. The active spear tip of this movement is anti-wokeism and fears about cancel culture and critical race theory and all that.

When you look at what actually happens—you look at the way in which the education system is of paramount importance in Yarvin's conspiracy theory, there is a direct line from that to using groomer panic and critical race theory to stage a fascist takeover of the entire Florida educational system, which just happened. It just happened. Florida's education system has literally banned most of the stuff that Curtis Yarvin thinks is secretly running the world. So these ideas are having a huge impact. There were many, many steps between Curtis Yarvin and Florida Governor Ron DeSantis. But those steps existed and can be linearly traced.

ROBINSON

I watched the full Yarvin interview with Tucker Carlson. Tucker Carlson was totally fascinated.

SANDIFER

Of course he was.

ROBINSON

Carlson presented Yarvin as this fascinating intellectual who is silenced by the mainstream but who has really, really valuable and interesting ideas. The whole hour they spent was Yarvin

expounding this theory that there is this kind of conspiracy of elites that he calls "the cathedral" that consists of Harvard and the *New York Times* and the government and all that. And he was explaining to Tucker how people who put Black Lives Matter signs in their yard, that the sign really says, "I love power and conformity."

He talked about *the red pill.* He said, you're going to take the red pill, you're gonna see things for how they really are. And Tucker Carlson has his mind blown by Curtis. But, importantly, all of it is about *the big woke conspiracy that rules the country*. None of it is about the solution being fascism, even though that's what Yarvin believes.

SANDIFER

Right. You don't say the fascism on primetime on Fox News. You say that at your little conservative conference where you've got the true believers. There is very much the propaganda front. And if you look at the overt political goals of these people—which is absolutely monarchic, or, at least oligarchic dictatorship of the very, very rich—you can absolutely see why Fox News is making the political moves in this.

ROBINSON

I want to just read a little passage from the end of your book that made me laugh. You write: *To engage in Alt-Right thinking is to turn oneself into a vacuous skinsuit animated by raw stupidity. There is literally not a single shred of non-stupidity in the entire thing. Mencius Moldbug, stupid. Milo Yiannopoulos, stupid. Donald Trump, Vox Day, stupid, stupid, stupid. MAGA and The Daily Stormer are stupid. Every single detail of every single aspect of this entire cratering shitstorm in which the human race seems hell bent on going extinct is absolutely fucking stupid.*

SANDIFER

I stand by every word of that.

ROBINSON

I like it when people on the left are aggressive in confronting this stuff. Your writing is a manifesto for intelligence and thinking about things carefully. The alternative to this horrible apocalyptic stupidity is something that we have to offer. And your writing is very beautiful, and it's fun. You not only dissect in this book some of these horrific stupidities, but you do so with a kind of wit and beautiful prose that makes me want to be on your side rather than with these stupid neoeactionaries.

SANDIFER

You talk about my being aggressive. I want to point out that I was sitting on a laptop in a comfortable room—smoking what, I will not say—while I wrote most of that book. I was in a very safe place. There are activists who are on the frontlines who are having these people screaming in their faces. There are activists who will go to jail and will get themselves killed in the long run continuing to stand up to these people, to do whatever it takes to make sure that these people do not take power and do not kill the people that they want to kill. And those are the people who were being aggressive. Those are the people who deserve praise. If my book has value it is that it will make people realize how bad the situation is, look up those activists, and get in that protest line and get their faces screamed at, too. Fundamentally, that's what bravery and confrontation looks like, not writing a book about it.

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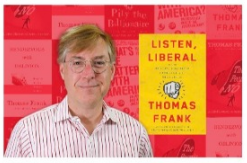

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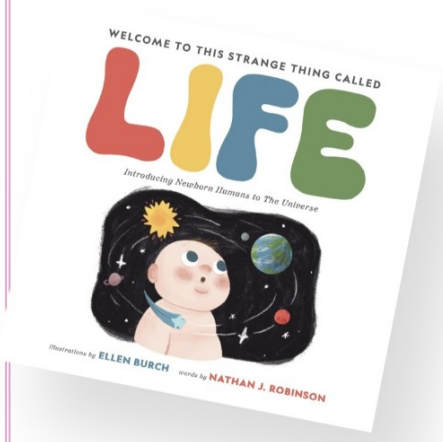
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